

THE Saturday Magazine.

N^o 572. SUPPLEMENT,



MAY, 1841.

{ PRICE
ONE PENNY. }

OVERLAND JOURNEY FROM INDIA TO ENGLAND.



A RAJAH AND HIS VASSALS.

THIRD ROUTE.

BY WAY OF LAHORE, CAUBUL, BALKH, BOKHARA, TOORK-MANIA, KHOASAN, AND PERSIA, TO THE BLACK SEA.

We now invite the reader to accompany us in our third overland journey from India, during which we propose to traverse some of the countries of Central Asia, situated between Hindostan and the Caspian Sea. Our fellow travellers will be principally Sir Alexander Burnes, Mr. Elphinstone, and Colonel Conolly.

If we examine a map of Asia we find that the river Indus forms a general boundary between Hindostan and the countries westward of it. Beginning from the south, where that river discharges itself into the Indian Ocean, we find that both sides of the river are in the dominions of Sinde, which is bounded on the east by Rajpootana, or the country of the Rajpoots, and on the west by Beloochistan. But when we ascend higher up the river we find that it forms a general boundary between the Punjab,—recently under the rule of Runjeet Singh,—and Caubul or Afghanistan.

Now, every British officer who crosses the Indus in his way overland to England, must pass through territories not belonging to the British crown before he reaches the Indus. In discussing the political relations of Asia it would undoubtedly appear advantageous to England, if the banks of the Indus were in her possession; but this is a matter with which we have nothing here to do, and shall therefore merely state the fact. After crossing the Indus, some travellers proceed directly through Caubul and Khorasan, to the Caspian Sea; but we shall find more objects of interest

by taking a more northerly route through the north-east part of Caubul, and thence through Balkh to Bokhara; from whence we shall proceed by Mushed and Astrabad, to the Caspian.

On leaving Delhi, the former capital of Hindostan, but now under British dominion, our route takes us north-west towards the river Sutledje, the eastern boundary of the Punjab. This name, "Punjab," is singularly expressive of the nature of the country to which it is applied. It means, in Oriental language, "five rivers," and designates a triangular district watered by five rivers, which ultimately combine and form the Indus. Alexander the Great traversed this country in his career of conquest, and his historians speak of it in these terms:—"The greater part of this country is level and champaign, which is occasioned chiefly, as some suppose, by the rivers washing down quantities of mud during their overflows, insomuch that many countries have borrowed their very names from the rivers which pass through them." This country is inhabited chiefly by Seiks or Singhs, the descendants of a sect of priests established in the fifteenth century. These Seiks were energetic men; and Mr. Forster, writing in 1783, said: "Should any future cause call forth the combined efforts of the Seiks, to maintain the existence of empire and religion, we may see some ambitious chief, led on by his genius and success, absorbing the power of his associates, display from the ruins of their commonwealth the standard of monarchy." This sagacious remark has been amply justified in the subsequent career of Runjeet Singh, who was born about the time that Forster made this prediction. The powerful kingdom or

chiefdom raised by this extraordinary man, as well as the personal qualities of the ruler, have already occupied our attention in a former volume*.

Through this country, then, we proceed. On crossing the river Sutledge, the mighty Himalaya mountains are dimly visible, at a distance of one hundred and fifty miles, clothed in snow almost from base to summit, and forming a striking contrast with the pleasing verdure of the plains of the Punjab. Near the banks of the river are numerous villages, the houses of which are terrace-roofed, and formed of sun-dried brick on a wooden frame-work. The inhabitants are chiefly Hindoos, but among them are a small number of Mohammedans. In the upper parts of the river the inhabitants are exclusively agricultural; but lower down their habits are more predatory. When Sir Alexander Burnes entered the first Punjaub village, he was met by a crowd of females and children who approached to welcome him, and who had perhaps never before seen an European. The boys of the village also assembled to gratify their curiosity: while the party was approaching they were silent and looked with attention; but when it had passed, all was bustle and uproar, running and falling, jumping and laughing, till the head man and his troopers called the urchins to order. The first town beyond this village is Puttee, containing about 5000 inhabitants. The houses are constructed of brick, as are also the pavements of the streets.

On the eastern bank of the river Ravee, some distance west of the Sutledge, stands Lahore, the capital of the Punjab. Lahore is distinguished into the old and new cities, of which the former extended from east to west for a distance of five miles, and had an average breadth of three. The mosques and tombs, which were more substantially built than the houses, remain in the midst of the cultivated fields, as caravanserais for travellers. The modern city occupies the western angle of the ancient capital, and is encircled by a strong wall. The houses are very lofty, and the streets, which are narrow, are rendered dirty and unpleasant by open gutters which run along them. The king's mosque is a capacious building of red sandstone, which had been brought by Aurungzebe from near Delhi. Its four lofty minarets are still standing; but the temple itself has been converted into a powder magazine. On the opposite side of the river Ravee is the Shah Dura, or tomb of the emperor Juhangeer, a monument of great beauty. It is a quadrangular building, with a minaret at each corner rising to the height of seventy feet; it is built chiefly of marble and red stone, which are alternately interlaced in all parts of the building. The sepulchre is of chaste workmanship, with its inscriptions and ornaments arranged in beautiful mosaic. The garden, which once belonged to the same emperor, is a magnificent remnant of Mogul grandeur. It is about half a mile in length, with three successive terraces, one above the level of the other; a canal, which is brought from a great distance, intersects this beautiful garden, and throws up its water in nearly five hundred fountains, to cool the atmosphere.

Referring to the articles before alluded to, for further information respecting the dominions of Runjeet Singh, and the character of the inhabitants, we will proceed in our journey, in a north-western direction from Lahore. Sir A. Burnes was treated with the greatest kindness and hospitality by General Allard, and with magnificent familiarity by Runjeet, who detained the party for a few weeks, which were devoted to sport and merriment. He then proceeded on his journey, and fell in with an Eastern philosopher, who harangued the travellers in the following terms: "The world possesses three different atoms, all excellent, and all of which enter into the noblest work of God, —man. Neither the gem nor the precious metals can multiply or increase their size or number; in their beauty we find their excellence. In the vegetable kingdom, we see the trees and plants sucking moisture from the earth, and moulding it to their nature, increase in size and glory. In the animal kingdom we see the beasts of the field cropping those plants which afford them nourishment, and avoiding those which are noxious. In man alone have we every excellence; he possesses the beauty and ornament of the gem; understands and wields the properties of the vegetable kingdom; and, to the instinct of the animal creation, he adds reason and looks to futurity."—This philosophical disquisition was of a character to gain the Eastern sage a very high place in the estimation of his countrymen. The traveller whom we have had occasion to name, and a few companions, travelled in 1832, through the Punjaub and

Caubul to Bokhara; and it may be interesting to state the provisions they made to avoid danger in passing through these half-civilised countries. They decided that the best chance of safety was an appearance of poverty. They put away all their European clothing, and adopted the costume of Asiatics: a flowing Afghan robe, sash, sword, shaved head, ponderous turban, and slippers. They gave away tents, beds, and boxes; knowing that a hut, at best, would generally be their bed-room, and a coarse carpet or mat the bed. A blanket served to cover the saddle by day, and to sleep under by night: and saddle-bag, thrown across a horse, was the depository of the wardrobe. All the little comforts to which Europeans are accustomed, were dispensed with, and it was remarked,—“It is, nevertheless, a curious feeling to be sitting cross-legged, and to pen a journal on one's knees. Custom soon habituated us to these changes; and we did not do the less justice to our meals, because we discarded wine and spirits in every shape, and ate with our fingers from copper dishes without knives and forks.”

The five rivers which give the name to the Punjaub are successively crossed, in proceeding towards Caubul; and on the banks of the one of them, the Jelum,—called, when Alexander the Great crossed it, the Hydaspes,—is a very remarkable salt mine. It is situated near the outside of a range of hills, in a valley cut by a rivulet of salt water. The entrance to the mine is at the side of a hill, about two hundred feet above its base. After proceeding in an inclined direction three or four hundred yards into the body of the hill, we arrive at a cavern of irregular dimensions, excavated entirely in salt. The mineral is deposited in strata of the utmost regularity, occurring in vertical layers. None of the layers exceed a foot and a half in thickness, and each is distinctly separated from its neighbour by a deposit of argillaceous earth about an eighth of an inch thick, which lies like mortar between the strata. Some of the salt occurs in hexagonal crystals, but oftener in masses; the whole of it is tinged with red, varying from the slightest shade to the deepest hue. When our travellers visited this mine, there were about a hundred persons, men, women and children, at work there; and their small dim lamps were reflected with a glittering lustre from the sides. The salt is hard and brittle, so as to splinter when struck with the sledge-hammer and pickaxe. The rock is never blasted with gunpowder, from fear of the roof falling in, and accidents of this kind sometimes happen even in the present simple mode of excavation. The miners live in villages among the hills; and receive a rupee for every twenty maunds of salt brought to the surface, a task which may be performed by a man, his wife and child, in two days. In those parts of the mine where the mineral is near the surface, it is hewn into blocks of four maunds, two of which load a camel; but it is usually broken in small pieces. This salt holds a high reputation throughout India with native practitioners, from its medical virtues. It is not pure, having a considerable mixture of some substance (probably magnesia) which renders it unfit for curing meat.

The country near which we have now arrived is the immediate scene of the conflicts between Alexander and Porus. Our traveller remarks:—"In our search for the remnants of Alexander's cities, we are led into reflections on the state of the country in those days; and it is curious to compare them with our own times. We are informed that Porus, with whom Alexander fought on the banks of this river (the Hydaspes), maintained a force of 30,000 infantry, and 4000 cavalry, with 200 elephants, and 300 war chariots, and that he had subdued all his neighbours. Now, if we change the war chariots into guns, we have precisely the regular force of Runjeet Singh, the modern Porus, who has likewise overwhelmed all his neighbours. The same country will generally produce the same number of troops, if its population be not reduced by adventitious circumstances."

We now enter the country of Potewar, inhabited by a tribe of people called Gukers, famed for their beauty, and claiming a Rajpoot origin. "The credulity of these people is as great as in other parts of India. A grave and respectable man assured me, (says our traveller,) that he had seen a lake, called Ruwaesir, in the hill district of Mundee, on the Sutlej, which had three small islets floating upon it. These are a place of Hindoo pilgrimage; and my informant assured me that they approach to receive the votaries who embark upon them, and are floated out with their offerings. It is obvious that there must be some delusion or deception, which is practised with no small dexterity, as the place retains its character. A native told me that he had heard it

was an artificial heap of soil placed over reeds; but he had not visited the spot, and seemed to proffer his information from hearing my doubts as strongly expressed as I felt them. In the valley of Cashmeer there are moveable beds of melons, which, in some degree may be considered in the light of islands. The ingenious people of that valley spread a thick mat on the surface of their lake, and sprinkle it over with soil: it soon acquires a consistency from the grass growing upon it. On the following year they sow melons and cucumbers, and reap the harvest from a boat; and thus turn to account the very surface of the lake in their rich country. The melon islands of Cashmeer may have supplied a hint to the Hindoo priests of Mundee."

Proceeding onwards, through a country replete with associations of other times, we come to the fortress of Rotas: "As we wound through the dismal defiles, and might be ruminating on the various expeditions which had traversed this very road, the fort burst upon our view like the scene of a magic lantern. It had been hidden from us by towering precipices. We approached its ponderous walls by a straggling path which time had chiselled in the rock, and soon reached its lofty gateway. The black, hoary aspect of the fort, and the arid sterility of the surrounding rocks, inspired us with no favourable idea of the neighbourhood, which has been the resort of many a desperate band." From Rotas we enter into a mountainous and rugged country, of great strength, and the road is among ravines. The chaos of rocks, their vertical strata, terminating in needles from decomposition, the round pebbles that lay imbedded in the sandstone, and the wild scenery, make this an interesting neighbourhood.

We pass through the village of Manikyala, which stands on a spacious plain with a remarkable funeral monument, called a "tope," distinguished at a distance of sixteen miles, and arrive at the town of Rawil Pindee: this is pleasantly situated within twelve miles of the snow-covered mountains. "We were now fast leaving Hindostan, and its customs, behind us. The dandelion had become a common weed. At Manikyala, we halted next door to a bakery, where the whole bread of the village is cooked, and we were glad to be considered customers of the village oven."

About fifteen miles from Rawil Pindee we pass the defile of Margulla, and gain a view of the mountains beyond the Indus. This is a narrow pass over the low hills, and is paved with blocks of stone for 150 yards. A Persian inscription let into the rock, commemorates the fame of the civilized emperor who cut the road. The defiles continue for about a mile, when a bridge across a rivulet conducts the traveller to the next capavansera. "We continue our march about twenty miles, and arrive at Osman, which stands on a plain at the mouth of a valley close to the base of the outlying hills. Its meadows are watered by beautiful crystal rivulets, flowing from the mountains. Some of them are conducted by artificial means through the village, and turn little water-mills that grind flour. Up the valley stands the fort of Khanpoor, with some beautiful gardens; and over its snow-clad mountains rear their peaks. The fields of this fruitful valley lie neglected, from the exorbitant assessment of the person who farms it. The peasants have no hope of redress but by such an expedient; and this entire suspension of the labours of the husbandmen may open the understanding of the misguided governor."

We now approach towards the fortress of Attock: a place deriving its importance from several circumstances; it is on the banks of the Indus, forming the north-western extremity of Hindostan; it is on the great road from India to Tartary; and it is situated at the boundary between the Punjab and Afghanistan. The Indus is here divided into three branches; and our travellers determined to ford across it on the back of an elephant, which had been placed at their disposal for this purpose by Runjeet Singh's officers. "We mounted one of the chief's elephants, and, accompanied by himself and 200 horsemen, passed a few miles down the river to the village of Kyrakhu. I did not like the appearance of the torrent; and though I said nothing, would have willingly turned back; but how could that be, when I had been the foremost to propose it? The chief rallied his escort round him, threw a piece of silver money into the river according to custom, and dashed into it. We followed, and the whole of our party reached in safety." Some stragglers who attempted to follow them met with a melancholy fate. Instead of crossing at the exact point where the others had effected the passage, they passed a few yards lower down, with the water but knee-deep; yet very rapid. The whole seven were unhorsed in a moment, and swept

into the stream. The ferryman ran to their assistance, and extricated them all but one man and two horses.

We have now arrived in the country of Caubul, inhabited for the most part by Afghans; but the region a short distance on either side of the Indus is governed by the Punjab ruler. Runjeet Singh had a curious method of crossing the Indus at Attock with his army. He kept there a fleet of thirty-seven boats; which, when required to be used, were anchored in the stream, at a short distance from one another. A communication was then made from one to another by means of planks. Skeleton frame-works of wood, filled with stones, to the weight of 25,000 lbs., and bound strongly by ropes, were let down from each boat, to the number of four or six: these served as anchors, to prevent the boats from being carried down by the rapidity of the stream. It is not a little remarkable, as indicating the similarity of Oriental customs in different ages, that Alexander the Great, more than two thousand years ago, crossed the Indus at this very place in a manner almost exactly resembling that here described.

We are now quitting the territories of Hindostan, and entering on a land where covetousness of a neighbour's goods is the ruling passion. Our travellers therefore marched with their baggage, and divided their few servants into regular watches for the night. "We were now living as natives, and had ceased to repine at the hardness of the ground and the miserable hovels in which we sometimes halted. I had also disposed of my own valuables in what then appeared to me a masterly manner: a letter of credit for five thousand rupees was fastened to my left arm, in the way that the Asiatics wear amulets. My polyglot passport was fixed to my right arm, and a bag of ducats was tied round my waist. I also distributed a part of my ready money to each of the servants, and so perfect was the check that had been established over them, that we never lost a single ducat in all our journey, and found most faithful servants in men who might have ruined and betrayed us. We trusted them, and they rewarded our confidence. One man, Ghoolam Hoosun, a native of Surat, followed me throughout the whole journey, cooked our food, and never uttered a complaint at the performance of such duties, foreign as they were to his engagements." This man remained in England with Sir A. Burnes.

Afghanistan, on the western side of the Indus, is a large country inhabited by a vigorous and warlike race, but distracted and torn by internal dissensions. At the time when Mr. Elphinstone visited this country, in 1809, it was wholly under the rule of a powerful monarch, Ahmed Shah Dooranee. But since that time, through the contests of rival claimants to the throne, the monarchy has been utterly dismembered: one chieftain seized on this province; another on that; the ruler of the Punjab on a third, and so on, till it is now scarcely possible to say whether there is an Afghan kingdom or not. When Sir Alexander Burnes visited the country in 1832, the more valuable part of the country were in possession of four chieftains, who assumed sovereign authority over the territories which they seized, and who made their respective capitals at the cities of Peshawar, Caubul, Candahar, and Herat. At a still later period, the British government in India found it necessary to interfere in the political relations of this country; and the events of the year 1839, which shed such lustre on the British arms, had immediate reference to the contests between rival claimants for the Afghan throne. The reader will therefore see reason why we should pass over briefly the general character of the Afghan nation. Our route takes us only across the north-eastern part of the country, and we shall soon get into other dominions.

The first town of importance, after crossing the Indus at Attock, is Peshawar. At this place, Sir A. Burnes was received with much attention by the chief, who sent out his son, on an elephant, to welcome the English travellers; and afterwards invited them to a feast. "I need not state," says our traveller, "that we ate with our hands; but we soon ceased to wonder at a nobleman tearing a lamb in pieces and selecting the choice bits, which he held out for our acceptance. A long roll of leavened bread was spread in front of each of us as a plate; and, since its size diminished as the meat disappeared, it did its part well. Pilao and stews, sweets and soups, filled the trays; but the *bonne bouche* of the day was a lamb, that had never tasted aught but milk. A bitter orange had been squeezed over it, and made it very savoury. Four trays of sweetmeats followed with fruit; and the repast concluded with sherbet, mixed with snow, the sight of which delighted us as much as our

new friends." On the day following this repast, many of the most distinguished persons in Peshawar paid visits to the travellers, who found them rather intelligent persons, and of very buoyant spirits. During conversation, many of them rose up and prayed in the room, when the stated hours for Mohammedan worship arrived. The chief, or shah, would sometimes, during the month in which the travellers sojourned there, pay them an unexpected visit, and throwing off the restraints of state, enter into familiar conversation.

On the departure of the travellers, the shah adopted a line of conduct which places the Afghans in a favourable light as to generosity and courtesy. He sent a Persian gentleman to accompany them to Caubul; and gave them, in addition to letters of recommendation to distinguished persons on the route, six blank sheets of paper bearing his seal, which he begged them to fill up with the names of any persons whom they believed could assist them. In return for these favours he could scarcely be prevailed upon to accept the smallest present from the travellers.

In proceeding through the plains from Peshawar to Caubul, we pass through a plain where the pestilential wind called "simoom" is frequently experienced. The natives of this country say that the simoom is generally fatal. Travellers, who have recovered, remark that it attacks them like a cold wind, which makes them senseless. Water, poured with great violence into the mouth, sometimes recovers the patient; and a fire kindled near him, has a good effect. Sugar and the dried plums of Bokhara are also given with advantage. Horses and animals are subject to the effects of the simoom as well as man; and the flesh of those who fall victims to it is said to become so soft and putrid, that the limbs separate from each other, and the hair may be pulled out with the least force. It is as malignant in its effects during night as in the day; and in summer no one ever thinks of travelling while the sun is above the horizon. In a party of thirty or forty individuals, one only may be attacked, nor are those who escape sensible of any change in the atmosphere.

After passing through a country varied by alternate hills and plains, we arrive at Caubul, the nominal capital of the whole country, though of late years shorn of some of its importance by the establishment of independent governments at Peshawar, Candahar, and Herat. Caubul is a busy and populous city. There is a hill near the Emperor Baber's tomb, from the summit of which a very extensive view of the city and its environs can be obtained. A plain, about twenty miles in circumference, laid out with gardens and fields in pleasing irregularity, intersected by three or four rivulets, which wind through it by a serpentine course, and wash innumerable little forts and villages, presents itself before the view. The great bazaar of the city is an elegant arcade, six hundred feet long, and divided into four equal parts. Its roof is painted, and over the shops are the houses of some of the citizens. In the evening it is said to present a very interesting appearance: each shop is lighted up by a lamp suspended in front, which gives the city an appearance of being illuminated. The number of shops for the sale of dried fruits is remarkable, and their arrangement tasteful. At some of the shops may be purchased pears, grapes, apples, melons, quinces, and other fruits: at others, snipes, partridges, ducks, plovers, and game; in a third range, books, and Russian paper; and many others. In the month of May, a favourite white jelly, called *falodeh*, is sold in great abundance at the bazaar: it is strained from wheat, and drunk with sherbet and snow: a pillar of snow stands on one side of the sellers, and a fountain plays near it, which gives these places a cool and clean appearance. In the most crowded parts of the city there are generally story-tellers amusing the idlers, or dervishes proclaiming the glories and deeds of the prophet. There are no wheeled carriages in Caubul; but as the streets are kept in a clean state in dry weather, and are intersected by small covered aqueducts of clean water, the city is much more cleanly in its appearance than the generality of Oriental towns. Most of the houses are built of sun-dried bricks and wood, and few of them are more than two stories in height. Caubul is particularly celebrated for its fruit, which is exported in great abundance to India. Its vines are so plentiful that the grapes are given, for three months of the year, to cattle. There are ten different kinds of grapes grown there; and the people apply them to many uses, besides making wine of the juice. They use its juice in roasting meat; and during meals, use grape-powder as a pickle: procured by drying the grapes before they get quite ripe, and grinding them: this powder

has the appearance of Cayenne pepper, and has a pleasant acid taste.

From Caubul our route takes us in a north-westerly direction, over the mountains of Hindoo Coosh to the city of Balkh, between two and three hundred miles from Caubul. These mountains are very lofty, and being covered deeply in snow through many months of the year, afford a formidable barrier to the passage of the traveller northward. On the road, we come to Bameean, once a celebrated city, but now celebrated only for the colossal idols which are presented to view. A hill in the middle of the valley of Bameean is quite honeycombed by excavated caves, which ramify in every direction. The hills on both sides of the valley are formed of indurated clay and pebbles, which render their excavation a matter of little difficulty; but the great extent to which it has been carried, excites surprise. The excavated caves have no pretensions to architectural ornament, being nothing more than holes dug in the hills. But the gigantic idols are, indeed, astonishing monuments of ancient times. They consist of two figures, a male and a female, cut in alto relief on the face of a hill; the larger of the two being a hundred and twenty feet high. The male figure is mutilated; both legs having been fractured by cannon, and the countenance above the mouth is destroyed. The lips are very large; the ears long and pendant; and there appears to have been a tiara on the head. The figure is covered by a mantle, which hangs over it in all parts, and has been formed of a kind of plaster. The figure is without symmetry, nor is there much elegance in the drapery. The hands, which held out the mantle, have both been broken. The female figure is much smaller than the other, but similar to it in most respects. At the lower part of each figure are openings which lead to different caves or excavations in the hill; and through these there is an ascending road, which leads to the upper parts of the figures.

In travelling across the Hindoo Coosh range, Sir A. Burnes and his companions were frequently in danger of being robbed and seized by the rude inhabitants, who,—half Afghans, half Tartars,—owned no legitimate ruler, and lived in a predatory manner. Yet the buoyancy of an enterprising spirit enabled that officer to overcome all difficulties. He says: "The life we now passed was far more agreeable than a detail of its circumstances would lead one to believe, with our dangers and fatigues. We mounted at daylight, and generally travelled without intermission till two or three in the afternoon. Our day's progress averaged about twenty miles; but the people have no standard of measure: and miles, eoses, and fursukhs, were equally unknown, for they always reckon by the day's journey. We often breakfasted on the saddle, on dry bread and cheese; slept always on the ground, and in the open air; and after the night's march, sat down cross-legged, till night and sleep overtook us. Our own party was everything that could be wished, for the Nazir and his amusing fellow-traveller were very obliging. We were quite happy in such scenes, and at the novelty of everything; and it was also delightful to recognise some old friends among the weeds and shrubs. The hawthorn and sweet briar grew on the verge of the river; and the rank hemlock, that sprang up under their shade, now appeared beautiful, from the associations which it awakened. Our society, too, was amusing; and I took every favourable occasion of mingling with the travellers whom we met by the way, and at the halting-places."

Journeying on in this way, we suppose our fellow-travellers to have arrived at Balkh. This city, which gives its name also to a surrounding district, is of the highest antiquity. It was known to the Greeks in the time of Alexander by the name of Bactra; but it had been the capital of Persia at a far earlier period, having been fixed on as the royal residence by Khosroo, supposed to be the same as Cyrus the Great. All the Asiatics are impressed with the idea of its being the oldest city in the world, and, in consequence, distinguish it by the title of Omool Belaud, the "Mother of cities." This ancient metropolis is now reduced to insignificance. Its ruins still cover a great extent, and are surrounded by a wall; but only one corner is inhabited.

Balkh is one of those cities which have become a sort of football among conquerors; now belonging to this nation, now to that. A century or two ago, it was under Persian dominion; then under that of the Afghans; afterwards under the chief of Khoondog; and at the time when Sir A. Burnes wrote, it was included in the kingdom of Bokhara. The ruins of the city occupy an area of ground twenty

* A drawing of this colossal idol is given in *Saturday Magazine* Vol. IX., p. 225.



AFGHAN NATIONAL DANCE.

miles in circumference, and consist of fallen mosques and decayed tombs, built of sun-dried bricks. In its wide area the city appears to have inclosed innumerable gardens, which increased its size without adding to its population. It contains the remains of three large colleges, now in a state of decay, with desolate cells or rooms. A mud wall surrounds a portion of the town; but it must be of late age, since it excludes the ruins on every side for about two miles. The city, like Babylon, has become a perfect mine of bricks for the surrounding country; these are of an oblong shape. Most of the old gardens are now neglected and overgrown with weeds; the aqueducts are dried up; and the greater part of the city looks more like a monument of departed greatness, than an important Oriental town. The modern population and buildings of Balkh are not sufficiently of importance to need any descriptive details here; we will therefore proceed onwards.

Balkh is situated at some miles' distance from the Oxus, a river noted in the campaigns of Alexander, and moreover of commercial importance in our own day, as leading to Lake Aral, a little eastward of the Caspian Sea. Along the road leading from Balkh to the river our travellers proceeded in the following manner.—The horses were exchanged for camels, over each of which two panniers, called "kujawas," were thrown. One person got into one pannier, and one in the other, by which a balance was maintained,—a mode which was at first very incommodious to the travellers, for the panniers were but four feet long, and two and a half wide, so that it required some suppleness and ingenuity to place the body in a comfortable posture. At times they pitched their camp for the night on the ground, in the immediate vicinity of the Toorkman tents. "We had now no tents, nor shelter of any kind, but a coarse single blanket, which we used to stretch across two sets of panniers. Even this flimsy covering sheltered us from the sun's rays, and at night we had it removed, and slept in the open air. Our food now consisted of bread and tea, for the Toorkmans often object to dispose of their sheep, since it injures their estate; and we could only look on their countless flocks, with a desire to possess a single lamb, which often could not be gratified. Europeans, who are so much accustomed to animal food, are sensible of the change to a diet of bread, but we found it tolerably nutritive, and had much refreshment from the tea, which we drank with it at all hours. I found that abstinence from wine and spirits proved rather salutary than otherwise; and I doubt if we could have un-

dergone the vicissitudes of climate had we used such stimulants."

The river Oxus, at the part where it is approached from Balkh, is broad and noble, and is crossed in a curious manner. The travellers get into a boat, to which are yoked two horses by the hair of the mane. The bridle is then put on as if the horses were to be mounted; the boat is pushed into the river; and, without any other assistance than the horses, is ferried directly across the river. A man in the boat holds the reins of each horse, and allows them to play loosely in the mouth, urging the animal to swim, and, thus guided, he advances without difficulty. There is not an oar to aid in impelling the boat, and the only assistance from those on board consists in manoeuvring a rough pole at the stern, to prevent the vessel from wheeling in the current, and to give both horses clear water to swim. They sometimes use four horses, in which case two are fixed to the stern of the boat. These horses require no preparatory training, since the natives yoke indiscriminately all that cross the river. By this ingenious mode a rapid river, nearly half a mile in width, is crossed in fifteen minutes.

On reaching the northern bank of the Oxus, we find ourselves in Toorkistan, the native country of the Uzbek Tatars, and the region from whence Genghis Khan and Tamerlane poured down their armies of rude barbarians on Southern Asia. The route to Bokhara, about half way between Balkh and the Aral Sea, lies not far from the northern bank of the Oxus, and along this route we proceed. The mode of travelling in this region, for persons going to Bokhara, is to start about six in the evening, and go over a stage of about twenty-five miles, by seven or eight in the morning, the camels moving at a steady pace, at the rate of about two miles an hour. At the rising and setting of the sun, the merchants who travel this route, and who, whether they belong to Bokhara, Persia, Balkh, or Afghanistan, are generally Mohammedans, halt to repeat their prayers. At other times also they halt to give drink to the camels.

Notwithstanding that the Oxus is so noble a river, the country on either side of it is little better than a desert, for a distance of a hundred miles, and over this desert not a town or a tree is to be seen. On the route from Balkh to Bokhara the first considerable town met with is Kurshee. It is a straggling place, a mile in length, with a considerable bazaar, and about ten thousand inhabitants, who live in flat-roofed, mean-looking-houses. A mud fort, surrounded by a wet ditch, forms a respectable defence on the south-west

side of the town. A river, which rises from Shuhur Subz, about fifty miles distant, and famous as the birth-place of Timour the Tartar, passes north of Kurshee, and enables its inhabitants to form numerous gardens, shaded by lofty trees.

The city of Bokhara, to which we at length arrive, is one of the most important cities of Asia, being situated in a central spot, having Russia on the north, the Caspian on the west, Persia and Caubul on the south, and the Chinese Empire on the east; thus forming a medium of communication for merchants trading from one country to the others. The city is of a triangular shape, and enclosed by an earthen wall, in which are eleven gates built of brick, with a round tower on either side. The widest street in the city measures but seven feet in width, and the narrowest only three or four. The houses are built of sun-dried bricks, on a framework of wood, and are all flat-roofed. They are arranged in the Oriental manner, presenting towards the street a mere wall, without windows, with a gate in the middle, leading to a court-yard, round which the rooms are placed, which, generally receive light through the doors. The town is intersected by canals, which receive water from a neighbouring river, the water being afterwards distributed to about seventy wells or cisterns, each a hundred and twenty feet in circumference. The Royal Palace stands on a conical hill, and is inclosed by a wall sixty feet high, which has but one gate, opening into a large corridor. This corridor, built over vaults, leads to the flat top of the hill, where the buildings stand in which the king and his court are lodged. These edifices consist of a mosque, the dwellings of the king and his children, the harem,—surrounded by a garden and concealed by trees,—and the vizier's house. Bokhara contains three hundred and fifty mosques, the principal of which stands opposite the royal palace, occupying a square of three hundred feet, with a dome a hundred feet high. The bricks forming the front are of different colours, and are so disposed as to form different designs of flowers tied together. Attached to this mosque is the minaret of Mirgharab, nearly two hundred feet in height, with a base seventy feet in circumference.

The city contains a great number of colleges, amounting to about sixty, of which one third contain upwards of seventy students each. These edifices are generally in the form of a parallelogram, two stories high, and inclose a spacious court-yard. In each story are two rows of chambers, one having its windows towards the court-yard, and the other towards the street. These chambers are sold to the students, who in this manner acquire a claim to a certain yearly maintenance from the college. The colleges have considerable revenues, the whole of the bazaars and baths of the city having been erected by pious persons, and left for the maintenance of the colleges and mosques. The number of the baths here alluded to is eighteen, some of which are of large dimensions, and consist of several vaulted chambers, built round a large basin filled with warm water.

There are fourteen caravanserais in Bokhara, all built on a similar plan, each consisting of a range of square buildings of two stories, inclosing a court yard, and having rooms round the court yard used as warehouses, and let to merchants. The bazaars are numerous and extensive, some of them being upwards of a quarter of a mile in length. In the shops with which they are lined on both sides, every sort of merchandize is exposed for sale, with the exception of woven goods, which are sold in large edifices built for that purpose; several of these edifices, each consisting of some hundreds of small shops, contain only the silk goods, which are manufactured in the town; while others contain the cottons, linens, and brocades of England, Russia, Persia, and India. The number of shops in the great square of the city is very considerable. Tents of different colours are filled with the more common manufactures of the country, but the greater part of this open square is a market, in which the fruits of the country, consisting of grapes, melons, apricots, apples, peaches, pears, and plums, are sold, as well as the more important necessities of life. This great square is a place of great bustle and animation, where a stranger may meet with Persians, Jews, Turks, Russians, Chinese, Toorkmans, Mongols, Cossacks, Hindoos, Afghans, and Uzbecks. These are principally merchants carrying on the extensive trade of which Bokhara is the centre; importing tea, porcelain, silk goods, raw silk, rhubarb, and silver, from the Chinese dominions; cochineal, spices, sugar, tin, sandal-wood, woollen-cloth, leather, wax, iron, copper, steel, small looking-glasses, otter-skins, pearls, cast-iron utensils, needles, coral, cotton-velvet, and numerous other articles, by way of Russia; shawls, girdles, carpets,

and turquoise stones, from Persia; and shawls, brocade, muslins, pearls, precious stones, indigo, and other articles, from India.

Sir Alexander Burnes resided some time at Bokhara, and appears to have been much struck with the bustling appearance of the city. He says: "In every part of the open square there are people making tea, which is done in large European urns, instead of teapots, and kept hot by a metal tube. The love of the Bokharees for tea is, I believe, without parallel, for they drink it at all times and places, and in half a dozen ways: with and without sugar, with and without milk, with fat, with salt, &c. Next to the vendors of this hot beverage one may purchase 'ratrut-i-jan,' or the 'delight of life,'—grape jelly or syrup, mixed up with chopped ice. This abundance of ice is one of the greatest luxuries in Bokhara, and it may be had till the cold weather makes it unnecessary. It is pitted in winter, and sold at a price within the reach of the poorest people. No one ever thinks of drinking water in Bokhara, without icing it, and a beggar may be seen purchasing it as he proclaims his poverty and entreats the bounty of the passenger. It is a refreshing sight to see the huge masses of it, with the thermometer at 90°, coloured, scraped, and piled into heaps like snow."

The king of Bokhara is a more enlightened man than the generality of Asiatic monarchs; yet he is not free from that painful distrust which arises from fear of poisoning or assassination. The water which he drinks is brought in skins from the river, under the charge and seal of two officers; it is opened by the vizier, first tasted by his people and then by himself, when it is once more sealed and despatched to the king. The daily meals of his majesty undergo a like scrutiny; the minister eats, then gives to those around him who wait for an hour to judge of the effect of the food; after which the viands are locked up in a box and forwarded to the king. His majesty has one key of the box, and the vizier another.

We now leave the city of Bokhara, and proceed towards Mushed, on the frontiers of Persia. From the city to the Oxus is a sandy desert, which can only be crossed by caravans, supplied with the means of support and of defence against marauders. A great part of the distance is occupied by vast fields of soft sand, formed into ridges which bear some resemblance to those on many sea shores. The belt of these sand ridges, lying between Bokhara and the Oxus, is about twelve or fifteen miles in width; they are utterly destitute of vegetation, and present a remarkable uniformity of shape, generally that of a horse shoe. On the southern side of the Oxus, likewise, a similar character pervades the country. Here few towns, and those far between, are met with; and the traveller has but a weary time of it. While Sir A. Burnes and his companions were travelling across this sandy tract they met seven Persians, who had been captured by the Toorkmans, and who were then on the road to Bokhara to be sold as slaves. Five of them were chained together, and trod their way through the deep sand. There was a general expression of compassion among the travellers in the caravan; and the sympathy did not fail to affect the poor creatures themselves. They cried, and gave a longing look, as the last camel of the caravan passed onwards toward Persia, their native country. They had been seized by the Toorkmans near Mushed, a few weeks before, when the culture of their fields had led them beyond the threshold of their homes.

The arrangement of the numerous persons and camels forming a caravan through the Toorkman desert gives occasion for the display of much kindly feeling, which is almost universally shown. If a single camel throws its load, all the caravan waits till it is replaced. It has been observed, "A caravan is an interesting scene at all times; and the shifts of the pious to prevent its detention in the Toorkman desert are not unworthy of notice. The line is generally too extensive to sound a halt for prayers, but at the appointed time, each individual is to be seen on the back of his camel, or in his pannier, performing his orisons, in the best manner which he could accomplish them."

After passing through these sandy deserts, we come to the town of Merve, and next to Shurukha. These towns being situated on the frontiers of the Persian empire, have often suffered from the incursions of the ruthless Toorkmans in the north, and the inhabitants seized and sold as slaves. The Toorkmans are divided into several tribes, but they all pursue nearly the same course of life. In small parties or gangs, they approach Persia by short and easy stages, and after reaching the frontiers, they will hover for days in

sight of a fort, watching for a favourable opportunity of capture. If none present itself, they make a dash upon the fields in the morning, while the shepherds and husbandmen are pursuing their occupations, and bear off with speed whoever they may be able to seize. If hotly pursued, they relinquish a spare horse with which every two individuals are provided, and gallop off to a place of safety. In such expeditions, the fleetness of his horse is the chief guarantee which the Toorkman has for his success, and he accordingly bestows the utmost attention on his beast. The Toorkmans are accustomed to subject the horses to severe exercise after a long abstinence from food and water, which brings the animals to a state of great hardihood. They are coarse-looking animals, with none of the sleekness seen in European horses; but the manner in which they are trained enables them to bear great fatigue. On one occasion, the inhabitants of the town of Merve were attacked, and Bairam Khan, with 700 followers, were captured by a large troop and carried to Bokhara; upon which the wives and daughters of the prisoners embodied and appeared in the field as soldiers, performing such feats as have caused their names to be handed down in songs and legends.

Shurukhs is a Toorkman settlement, consisting of a small and weak fort, situated on a hillock, under cover of which most of the inhabitants have pitched their tents. There are a few mud houses, which have been built by the Jews of Mushed, who trade with this people. But the Toorkmans themselves live in the conical houses peculiar to their tribe: they are constructed of wood, surrounded by a mat of reeds, and roofed with felts, blackened with soot. Two thousand families are here domiciled, and about an equal number of horses. If their town be attacked by a force, either from Persia on the south, or from Khiva on the north, which they are unable to resist, they flee to the desert, and remain there till the storm is over. Sir A. Burnes heard of an incident at Shurukhs, which illustrates the dreadful state of enmity between the people on either side of this frontier. A Persian youth, who had been captured by the Toorkmans, dragged out a miserable life of servitude at Shurukhs. He was resolved to be free, and chose the opportunity of his master being at an entertainment, to effect his object. He saddled the best horse in the stable; and on the very eve of departure was discovered by his master's daughter, who attempted to give the alarm. He drew his sword, and put the girl to death. Her cries alarmed the mother, whom he also slew: and as he was bidding his final farewell to Shurukhs, the master himself arrived. The speed of the horse, which had so often been employed in the capture of his countrymen, now availed this fugitive, who was pursued, but not overtaken: and thus, by an exertion of desperate boldness, did he regain his liberty, leaving the master to deplore the loss of his wife and his daughter, his slave and his horse.

As we shall soon leave the Toorkmans, we will give a brief description of one of their entertainments when guests are invited. Cakes are baked, about two feet in diameter, and an inch thick, of the coarsest flour, mixed up with slices of pumpkin. When the party assembles, a cloth is spread, and each person crumbles down the piece of cake which is laid before him. The meat is then brought, which generally consists of one entire sheep, boiled in a huge Russian pot. They separate the flesh from the bones, and tear it into as small pieces as the bread, with which it is then mixed. A dozen or more onions are then shred, and the whole, including meat, bread, and onions, is thrown into the hot liquor, or soup in which the sheep was boiled. The mess is then served out in wooden bowls, one of which is placed before every two persons. Each guest then fills his open hand from the bowl, and commencing from the wrist, licks up the soup like a dog, holding his hand and head over the bowl, which receives all that falls. Each of the two in his turn fills his hand, and holds his head over the bowl. Melons follow, and the banquet concludes with a pipe of tobacco. Such is an example of the manners of these children of the desert.

We now reach Mushed, the capital of Khorassan, and one of the most important cities in the Persian empire. The whole city is surrounded by a wall, which is said by the inhabitants to be twelve miles in circumference; but Mr. Fraser does not estimate it at more than one-half that extent. The wall, however, incloses many vacant spaces, which reduce the parts actually inhabited, to a much smaller limit. The whole city appears from the first to have been built of sun-dried bricks or mud, so that everything assumes the monotonous gray earthy colour common to all Persian towns. The approach to the houses is generally through

dark lanes and narrow alleys, "guiltless of the smallest attention to cleanliness or convenience." Most Oriental towns are deficient in broad streets, and Mushed is not an exception to this rule. The only street, worthy of the name, is that which extends from north-west to south-east. In the centre of this street runs a canal, the edges of which were once faced with stone; while large slabs of the same material were laid across at intervals as bridges: but many of them have fallen in, and the whole is greatly out of repair. A few trees are ranged along at the sides of the canal, and houses occupy both sides of the street.

The most important public building in Mushed is the Mausoleum of Imaum Reza, described as being one of the most splendid structures to be found anywhere in the East: it is situated in the centre of the city, and the roads leading from all parts of the adjacent country, meet at this spot. The first thing that strikes the eye on arriving at this point, is a noble oblong square, inclosing an area a hundred and sixty yards in length, and seventy-five in breadth, built in the manner of a caravanserai, having two stories of apartments all round, which open in front into a handsome arched gallery. In the centre of each side and end, there is a magnificent and very lofty gateway, serving as entrances. The large square inclosed in this manner, which is called the *Sahn*, is flagged with grave-stones, which form almost a continuous pavement, and under which lie the bodies of Persians of noble birth. Three of the gateways lead from the city itself, while the fourth, on the south-west of the square, is the entrance to the grand mausoleum.

This mausoleum comprises a mass of buildings of an octagonal form, and covers an area not much less than that of the *Sahn*. A silver gate admits the devotee into a passage which leads to the chief apartment, beneath a gilded cupola.

This apartment is of magnificent dimensions, rising into a lofty dome above, and branching out below into the form of a cross, the whole being ornamented with polished tiles, covered with azure and gold. The four lateral archways from this central apartment lead to shrines of most costly character. The arch at the north-west leads to a richly-carpeted room, in one corner of which is the shrine containing the ashes of the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid: the shrine is surrounded by a massive grating of fine-wrought steel, within which is a railing of solid gold, and a door leading to the shrine is plated with gold and covered with jewels. Opposite to this jewelled door, an archway, screened by a curtain, leads to another octagonal apartment, domed, and lined with coloured tiles. This contains the bones of many great men. From the south-west archway in the great central chamber a broad passage leads to a court belonging to a very beautiful mosque. Both sides of this court are formed of buildings similar to those of the *Sahn*, having two stories of niches or compartments: it is paved with flag-stones, and in the centre is a small tank, which, with several jars in different corners, is kept full of water, for the purposes of ablution, or for quenching thirst. The mosque in the middle of this court has but one dome and one archway, which rises to a great height, in a noble screen, that conceals the neck of the dome. At either end of this screen rise minarets of a beautiful form, and the whole is richly decorated with coloured tiles. On each side of the space beneath the dome there are arched apartments, with matted floors, for the use of the moolahs, and those who retire to pray or to read the Koran: there is also before the archway a large platform, matted for the convenience of devotees, but the greatest number of these pray under the opposite archway of the mausoleum, or the niches on either side, which are fitted up for the purpose.

But it is necessary now for us to leave Mushed and its gilded mausoleum, and proceed on our journey.

Mushed is situated south-east of the Caspian Sea, and the route by which Europe may be reached is generally by way of Astrabad, on the shores of that sea. This distance is passed through a country beset with dangers of the same kind as those which occur north-east of Mushed. The Toorkmans of the Caspian, as they are called, have nearly the same love of plunder as their brethren, and the traveller has to look sharply about him while on this route. Sir A. Burnes had, through an interview with the Prince Royal of Persia, at Mushed, gained the assistance of a large escort in his future journey. Some Toorkmans had entered the Persian service, and the following incident, related by that traveller, will further illustrate the manners of this people. "On winding through the valley we had an opportunity of witnessing an interesting sight, in the welcoming of a chief, or 'Aksukal,' who had accompanied us from Koochan. We

had only known him as a wild Toorkman, and, for my own part, I had scarcely noticed him; but here he was a noble, and what is greater, a patriarch. He had been summoned by the Prince Royal, and now returned to his home. For miles before reaching the camp the Toorkmans crowded about us to bid him welcome: all of them were on horseback, men, women, and children, and several of them cried as they kissed his hand. At length, in a shady and picturesque part of the valley, a party which appeared more respectable than the others, had dismounted and drawn up. This was the family of the chief: he leaped upon the ground with the enthusiasm of a youth, rushed forward, and kissed in succession four boys, who were his sons. The scene was pathetic, and the witty Persians, who had before been imitating some of the actions and exclamations of the Toorkmans, were silenced by this fervent flow of affection. Three of the boys were under ten years of age, yet they mounted their horses with spirit, and joined the cavalcade."

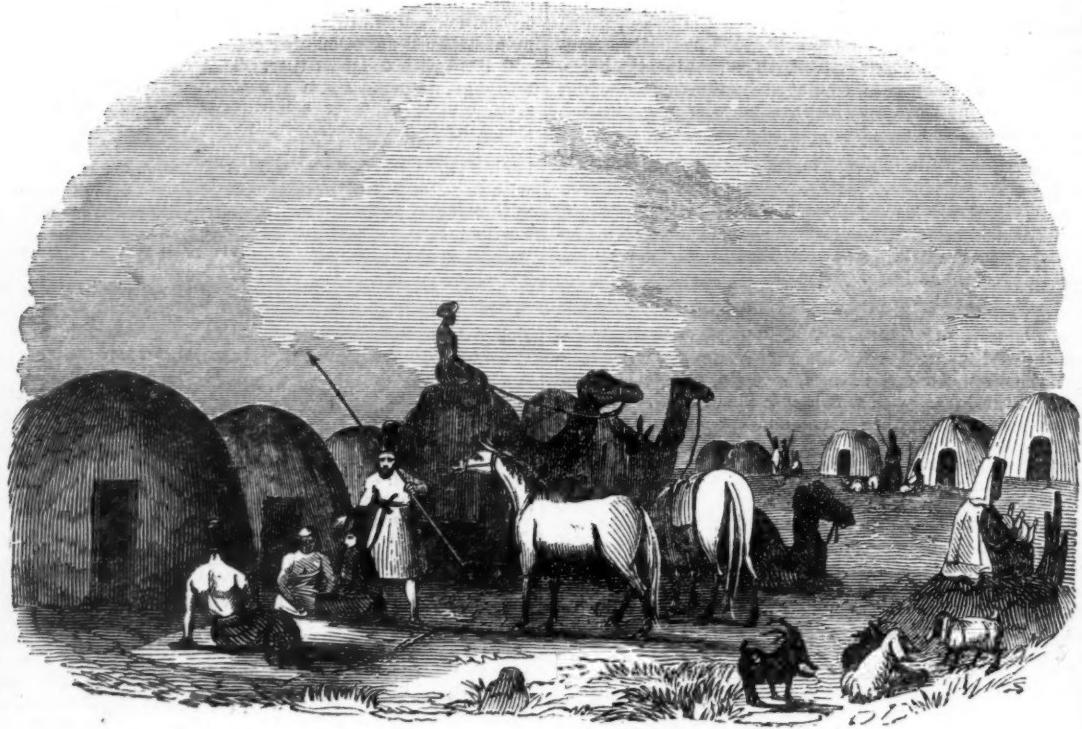
Through a country inhabited by Toorkmans, but subject, nominally at least, to the power of Persia, we travel onward to the shores of the Caspian; during the course of which route we pass through a few towns, but none of importance till we reach Astrabad.

Astrabad is the capital of a small province, bounded on the north by the Caspian Sea and the Toorkman Desert, on the south by the Elburz mountains, on the west by Mazanderan, another Persian province, and on the east by the river Gourgan. The capital is not above ten miles from the shores of the Caspian, and is believed to owe its origin to Yezid ibu Mehlloob, an Arab general, who built it towards the end of the first century of the Mohammedan era. The circumference of the town is about three miles and a half, the whole being surrounded by a high and thick wall, which is now in a ruinous condition. The streets are generally paved, and their cleanliness is promoted by a drain which runs through the centre of them. The town contains but few public buildings worthy of note. When Sir A. Burnes passed through it, he found it devastated by the plague which had visited it a short time before. Half the shops and houses were closed, literally for want of masters; and the whole town presented a very dreary and desolate appearance.

From Astrabad we proceed through the provinces of Astrabad and Mazanderan, to Teheran, the present capital of Persia. This district, like many others in the East, is frequently attacked with the plague, which produces sad devastation. An English traveller was informed by an inhabitant of one of the towns that he had lost a son by the disease, and that he and his wife had both been attacked. She was nursing a child at the time; and though she continued to suckle it, the infant escaped the danger. The man stated that he had had the horror to see his own child dragged to the door by eight or ten cats, whom he with difficulty scared away; and affirmed it as his belief, that more people were killed by dogs and cats on the occasion, or died from hunger, than from the disease itself.

Teheran is approached from the east either by horses or mules, through a country which presents few natural points of interest.

Here we take leave of our journey. We have before described Teheran, and on two former occasions have traced the overland route from about Teheran to Europe, 1st.—through the provinces between the Caspian and Black Seas, and thence through Russia: and 2nd.—along the northern shore of Asia Minor to Constantinople. It will not be necessary, therefore, to go again over this ground. The countries through which we have passed have been very rarely indeed visited by Europeans, and are inhabited by nations possessing, generally speaking, considerable vigour of character. The Seikhs of the Punjab, the Afghans of Caubul, the Uzbeks of Balkh and Bokhara, and the Toorkmans of the sandy desert forming the northern boundary of Caubul and Khorasan, are all distinguished by such characteristics as make a journey among them no light matter. The overland journey is sometimes made in a direction somewhat more southerly, from Delhi towards Moultan near the Indus; thence to Candahar, in the middle of Caubul; thence to Herat, at the boundary between Caubul and Persia; and from Herat to Mushed. But the nature of the travelling along this route, and the objects met with by the way, do not differ much in character from those which have here engaged our attention.



A TOORKMAN CAMP.